

# Royal Commission on Electric Power Planning

CAZDN Z1

- 75 E02

D



3 1761 118500339



The  
Meetings  
in the North



CA 20 NZ 1  
- 75 EO 2

Government  
Publications

# The Meetings In Northern Ontario

LIKE A FLOCK OF GEESE  
IN THE FOG THEY PASSED  
THEN RETURNED HOME  
THIS MORNING  
IN A FLOCK OF SMALL BIRDS  
I SAW THEM  
THEY LEFT ME A FEATHER  
THE FEATHER IS HEAVY WITH OUR GRIEF  
MAY IT LIGHTEN AS THEIR WORK IS REALIZED

(Received anonymously at Memorial Services  
held by Grand Council Treaty No. 9.)



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024 with funding from  
University of Toronto

<https://archive.org/details/31761118500339>

**This Report is dedicated to**

<b>HARRY ACHNEEPINESKUM</b>	<b>Grand Council Treaty No. 9</b>
<b>DOUGLAS CLIFFORD</b>	<b>Austin Airways Limited</b>
<b>JOHN RICHARD HOUSTON, Q.C.</b>	<b>Tilley, Carson and Findlay (Counsel for Ontario Hydro)</b>
<b>BRYAN ROLLAND ISBISTER</b>	<b>Ontario Hydro</b>
<b>JOHN WESLEY JAMES</b>	<b>Ontario Hydro</b>
<b>JOE McCLELLAND</b>	<b>London Free Press</b>
<b>DOLORES MONTGOMERY</b>	<b>Public Interest Coalition for Energy Planning</b>
<b>ROBERT ALAN (ROBIN) SCOTT, Q.C.</b>	<b>Ministry of the Attorney-General (Counsel to the Royal Commission on Electric Power Planning)</b>
<b>DOUGLAS C. SHEPPARD</b>	<b>Grand Council Treaty No. 9</b>
<b>XAVIER SUTHERLAND</b>	<b>Grand Council Treaty No. 9</b>

**WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN A TRAGIC ACCIDENT  
ON SEPTEMBER 4, 1976  
IN SERVICE TO THE  
PROVINCE OF ONTARIO WHILE PARTICIPATING WITH THE  
ROYAL COMMISSION ON ELECTRIC POWER PLANNING**

# Royal Commission On Electric Power Planning

7th Floor  
14 Carlton Street  
Toronto Ontario  
M5B 1K5

Chairman:	Dr. Arthur Porter
Commissioners:	Robert E. E. Costello Madame Solange Plourde-Gagnon George A. McCague Dr. William W. Stevenson
Commission Staff:	Marc Couse Ann Dyer Roni Eigles Penny Evans Doreen Fenton Mary-Anne Foster Karen Gaynor Linda Hedge Thelma Hershorn Fred Hume, Q.C. Catherine Hunt Betsy McGregor Lyse Morisset-Blais John Neate Mary Ouchterlony Joan Pike Tony Rockingham Dr. Robert Rosehart Ronald Smith

## FOREWORD

This report, which is dedicated to those who lost their lives at Fraserdale on September 4, 1976 in serving the Province of Ontario, presents some insights into the meetings of the Royal Commission on Electric Power Planning which were held in several communities in northern Ontario during the period 30 August - 3 September 1976. It may help to identify some of the concerns, as well as the aspirations, of the native peoples of northern Ontario, as expressed in their own words in their own environments.

The material is based on the notes taken during the meetings by those members of the staff of the Commission — Marc Couse, Ann Dyer, Bob Rosehart and Ron Smith — who were on the trip to northern Ontario and who attended all the meetings. As is well known these four members of the Commission's staff returned to Toronto by alternative means. Ann Dyer accepted the responsibility of collecting the material and arranging it.

We are very conscious at this time, that this is a report which would have been superbly written by the late Joe McClelland, of the London Free Press, whose sensitivity for and recognition of the people of Grand Council Treaty No. 9, and of the Grand Tribal Chieftain, Andrew Rickard, is manifest in his writings — especially in the last article he ever wrote (London Free Press, Friday September 3, 1976).

The purpose of the meetings was to provide the Commission with opportunities to see (and to hear) with its own eyes (and ears) the nature of the environment and terrain and to become acquainted with the life-styles of the native peoples, and, in particular, to hear from the peoples about how these life-styles might be affected if certain river systems of northern Ontario were used for the generation of electric power. To the vast majority of we Ontarians, northern Ontario is that part of the province which embraces vast spaces, vast areas of forests, and beautiful and bountiful lakes, and great rivers but with few people. Few people, because the environment, contrasted with that of the southern regions of the province, can be hostile and unyielding — a land where "people have to be people" to survive, a land where life is only possible because everybody can rely on everybody else especially when emergencies arise.

In being instructed to "examine the long-range electric power planning concepts of Ontario Hydro for the period 1983-93 and beyond . . ." the Commission has recognized that public meetings and hearings should be held as widely as possible throughout the length and breadth of the province. This was the official reason for arranging the meetings in northern Ontario. But there were other reasons — to a man and a woman the participants in the mission were dedicated people who were driven by a spiritual commitment to see and to hear first hand, and not merely to read and thereby to obtain impressions second or third hand. And there was (and is) a dawning awareness of a hitherto unappreciated value of Northern cultures. This is how Judge Thomas Berger puts it:

"We Canadians think of ourselves as a northern people. Maybe we have at last begun to realize that we have something to learn from the races of people who have managed to live for centuries in the North, people who never did seek to change the environment, but rather to live in harmony with it . . . And maybe it is time the metropolis listened to the voices on the

frontier . . . because what happens in the North will be of great importance to the future of our country."

Let me illustrate this thought with an example. During the meetings the Commission was taught a very basic lesson by the native peoples. It was that language is central to the culture of the native peoples, and indeed, central to the culture of all peoples. The fact that the Commission was not well prepared in this regard, insofar as prepared material for the meetings was only available in the English language, will ensure that the same mistake will not be made again. In other words when future hearings of the Commission are held in northern Ontario we will arrange for the translation of all relevant materials into the Cree and Ojibway languages.

I hope this Report will serve another important purpose. I hope it will help to provide some answers to the questions, which are probably being raised today and will certainly be raised tomorrow and in five, and ten, and fifty years time and more, by the bereaved families, and by the yet unborn grandchildren of those who were lost, as to the reasons why the trip to northern Ontario was so essential to the work of the Royal Commission on Electric Power Planning. And in this latter regard it should not be forgotten that no finer evidence and exemplification of the spirit of seeking togetherness, which underpinned (and underpins) the work of the Commission, especially in the journey to northern Ontario, could be found or expressed than in the fact that those who lost their lives together, in a single instant of time, were, respectively, three representatives of Grand Council Treaty No. 9 and hence of the native peoples of northern Ontario, three representatives of Ontario Hydro, one representative of the Press, one representative of all the public interest groups who have been associated with the work of the Commission, and one representative of the Commission. Such a truly "ecumenical" group was not coincidental.

As a fitting conclusion to this Foreword it is, I think, appropriate to quote from Premier William Davis' message which was read by the Honourable Rene Brunelle at the Memorial Service held in Timmins on Tuesday, 7 September 1976:

"Our province and country can ill afford the loss of these dedicated and conscientious men and women who, in a spirit of genuine mutual respect and goodwill had been endeavouring to chart a course for Ontario Hydro which would best serve all Ontarians."

Arthur Porter  
Chairman  
December 1976.

## INTRODUCTION

Many Ontarians have anticipated for years inexhaustible energy resources in the North. These impressions have been reinforced by visions of great rivers, vast water resources, plentiful forests and huge tracts of uninhabited lands.

In the mid-60's, with increasing pressures on the water resources of the Great Lakes system, the Federal government, with the assistance of the Province of Ontario, initiated a series of studies to identify the diversion and energy potentials of our Northern river systems. This series culminated in 1973 with the publication by Environment Canada of the Summary Report on Engineering Feasibility and Cost Investigations entitled "Northern Ontario Water Resources Studies".<sup>1</sup> The report highlights the potential for development of approximately 3,000 megawatts capacity on the Albany River system but suggests that other major river systems, the Severn, Winisk and Attawapiskat (shown on the accompanying map), are not suitable for major power generation. Although numerous discussions resulted and many concerns were raised, notably by the native peoples, no definitive action was taken.

Concurrently with these studies the massive Baie James hydro-electric project was unfolding. This development would stretch over many years, would involve the construction of numerous dams, would result in the flooding of vast acres of land and would cause the relocation of some native communities. Large sums of money were paid to the native peoples for loss of property, fishing and hunting rights, in return for the right to develop hydraulic resources to produce 10,000 megawatts of power. Even as this project matured, little interest was shown for a smaller scale hydro-electric project on the Ontario side of James Bay.

Then, in June 1976 a Select Committee of the Legislature investigating Ontario Hydro rates recommended that the energy potential of the James Bay watershed should be re-examined. Specifically, the Committee suggested that:

... "The Ontario Government accept responsibility now for taking all necessary actions to ensure that Ontario receive the maximum reasonable benefit from the hydro-electric potential of the James Bay watershed."

However, the following reservation was noted:

"In Northern Ontario, the concerns of the native peoples and environmental problems will have to be dealt with before any development can take place. This increases the urgency for starting studies and inquiries now."

Reacting to the above, representatives of Grand Council Treaty No. 9 presented a submission to this Commission at a Public Information Hearing in Orangeville on July 21, 1976. (See legend on the accompanying map.) In this brief, delivered by the late Harry Achneepineskum, Grand Council Treaty No. 9 presented "concerns over future power development in the North, and the social and economic effects of proposed hydraulic and diversion plans on Northern Communities".

At that time the main issues raised were:

1. Respect for the terms and conditions as set out in Treaty No. 9,
2. Participation by the native people in the economic and energy planning of the north,

<sup>1</sup>Water Resources Branch, Inland Waters Directorate.

3. A moratorium on any plans to dam or divert rivers in the James Bay watershed,
4. A recognition that grandiose water manipulation schemes would contribute to the destruction of the ecology and would have serious economic and social implications on Indian communities,
5. A consideration of alternative energy sources for northern communities, in particular, wind energy and solar energy.

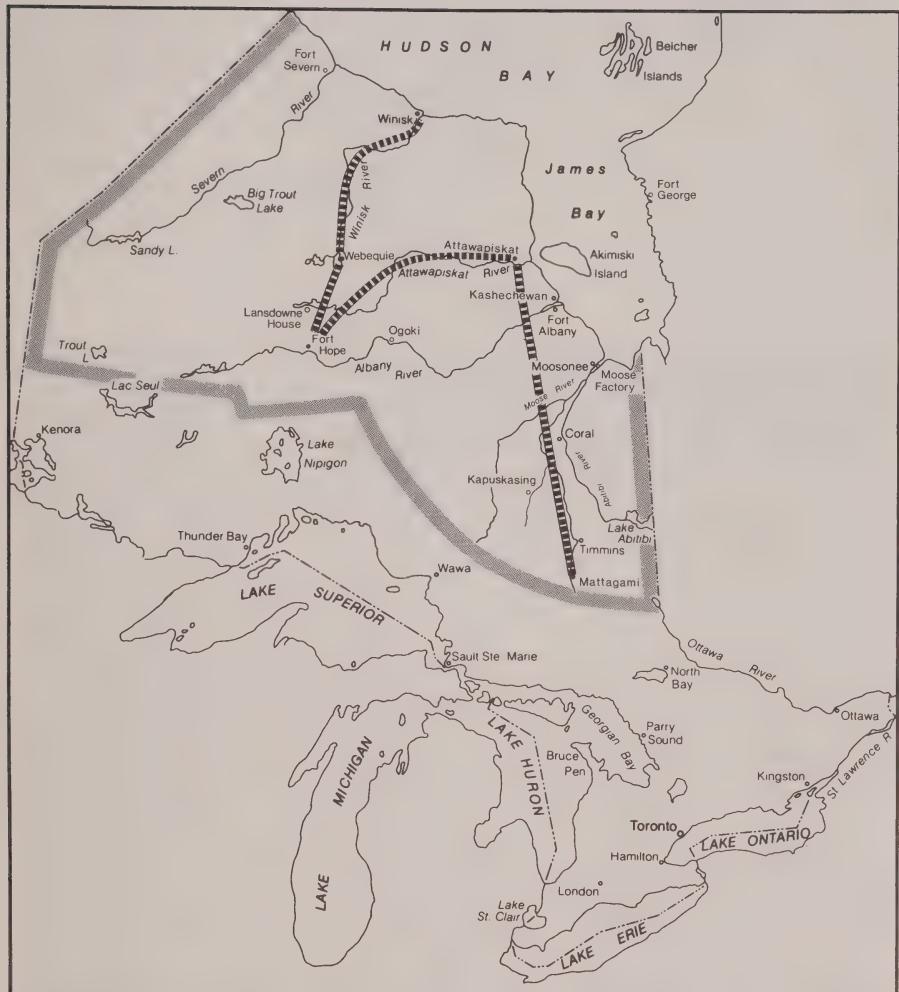
During the presentation an invitation was extended by Grand Council Treaty No. 9 to the Commission to "see for yourselves how the native people live off the land, and to hear firsthand our opinions on the effects of energy development."

Dr. Arthur Porter, the Commission Chairman, immediately acknowledged the Council's invitation and expressed the hope that the Commission would be able to accept it.

Within the next few weeks suitable arrangements were made and a group consisting of representatives from the Commission, the Public Interest Coalition for Energy Planning, Ontario Hydro and Grand Council Treaty No. 9 was organized to visit the Indian communities of Mattagami, Attawapiskat, Ogoki,<sup>2</sup> Fort Hope and Winisk.



<sup>2</sup>*Due to time constraints the party was unable to visit Ogoki, but an informal stop was made at Webequie, a satellite community of Fort Hope.*



### Legend

- indicates the route travelled by the Commission party between the communities visited.
- ██████████ indicates the approximate area, encompassing 210,000 sq. miles, in which the 16,000 people from 40 communities, represented by Grand Council Treaty No. 9, live.

## ACTUAL ITINERARY – NORTHERN TRIP

Sunday, August 29	Toronto to Timmins
Monday, August 30	<b>Morning</b> Meeting at Mattagami Reserve <b>Afternoon</b> Timmins to Attawapiskat by air <b>Evening</b> Introductory meeting with Attawapiskat Band Chief and Councillors
Tuesday, August 31	All day meeting with Attawapiskat Chief, Councillors and Elders
Wednesday, September 1	<b>Morning</b> Attawapiskat to Fort Hope by air <b>Evening</b> Introductory meeting with Fort Hope Band Chief and Councillors
Thursday, September 2	<b>Morning</b> Meeting with Fort Hope Band <b>Afternoon</b> Fort Hope to Webequie by air One hour visit in Webequie Ron Smith met with Community Leader Webequie to Winisk by air
Friday, September 3	<b>Morning</b> Meeting with Winisk Band <b>Afternoon</b> Depart Winisk

## THE DIALOGUE

Upon arrival in each community, representatives of Grand Council Treaty No. 9 met with the community leaders and made arrangements for the Commission party to meet with the Chief, Councillors, Elders and members of the community. In these meetings after formal introductions, Ron Smith, Executive Director of the Commission, explained the purpose of the Commission and indicated that these meetings were part of the information-gathering phase. He emphasized that the party was there to listen firsthand to the concerns of the native peoples. Throughout the week the party heard from school children, young mothers, trappers, hunters and Elders who ranged in age up to 106 years.

The following are highlights of what was heard as the party moved from community to community.



## MATTAGAMI

Population:	139 (92 on reserve)
Transportation:	unpaved road to highway
Communications:	radio-telephone at the school
Electric Power:	all homes, community hall and school have electricity
School/Hospital:	primary school (kindergarten through grade eight); no medical facilities
Proximity to Major centre:	40 miles by road to Timmins
Main Source of Livelihood:	working at industries in Timmins, some lumbering and fishing
Chief:	Willis McKay
Councillor:	Helen Naveau
Participants at Meeting:	Willis McKay                    Norman Naveau Raymond McKay

An informal meeting, conducted in English, was held in the Mattagami community hall with approximately 20 residents in attendance. As this was the first of the scheduled meetings, the late Harry Achneepineskum read a welcome speech from Grand Chief Andrew Rickard, Grand Council Treaty No. 9. In his speech Chief Rickard emphasized the need for the people of the North to participate in all future planning of Northern Ontario and hoped the fact that the Commission was visiting several Northern communities meant "recognition of the need to fully involve the people of the North in the North's future. This we believe, is imperative if there is to be a complete realization of all the facts and an appreciation of the needs, desires and aspirations of the people who will be directly affected by decisions pertaining to the North."

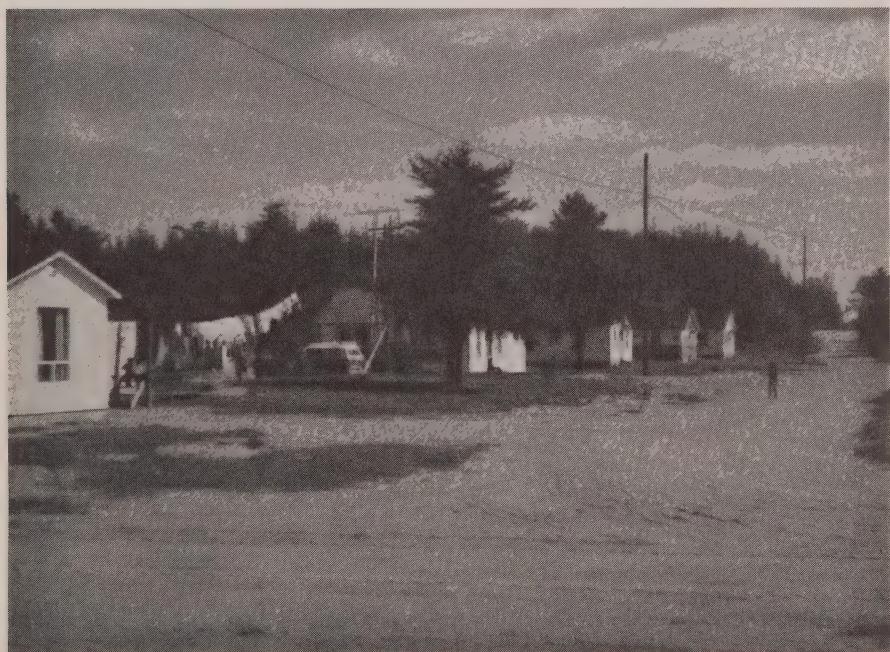
In the speech Chief Rickard reiterated the recommendations made in the submission by Treaty No. 9 to the Commission in Orangeville on July 21, 1976.

1. Ecological and socio-economic impact studies be commenced immediately on all energy developments proposed for the Treaty No. 9 area with total Treaty Nine involvement.
2. Treaty Number Nine representation be sought on all energy planning bodies affecting the Treaty Nine area.
3. The Royal Commission on Electric Power Planning should hold hearings in Northern native communities on the effect of the proposed Albany River diversion scheme. These hearings should be held only after proper notice is given to the native communities and to the Grand Council Treaty Number Nine.
4. Detailed energy requirements be ascertained for present and projected community development.
5. Availability of power from Quebec and Manitoba sources be ascertained and utilized.
6. Alternative technologies such as wind and solar energy be investigated immediately with Treaty Nine input.

7. James Bay and Hudson Bay coastal communities with their constant exposure to prevailing winds be offered as candidates for pilot projects experimenting with wind generation of power.
8. The recommendation of the Select Committee of the Legislature investigating Ontario Hydro on the Albany River diversion scheme should not be followed.
9. Nuclear stations and their possible installation in the Treaty Nine area be investigated, especially the depositing of residual waste materials.
10. The impact of transmission lines on the ecology and game movement must be fully investigated before further lines are built.
11. The Ontario Government and all planning and decision-making bodies be aware of our aboriginal rights, and that they be safeguarded from any resource and energy development.”

The Chief added two additional recommendations at this time:

- “12. Both the Grand Council Treaty No. 9 and affected Cree and Ojibway communities be notified immediately concerning any re-structuring or rebuilding of existing hydro dams in our area. The restructuring should **only** proceed with the consent of both the affected Cree and Ojibway communities and the Grand Council Treaty No. 9.
13. Both the Grand Council Treaty No. 9 and the affected Indian Communities be notified beforehand concerning any reactivation of hydro sites in our area. This reactivation should **only** proceed with the consent of both the affected Cree and Ojibway communities and the Grand Council Treaty No. 9.”



The residents of Mattagami reinforced the recommendations of the Grand Council when they expressed their fear "that those who planned any future development for the North would not consider the effects of development on the Indian communities."

One Mattagami resident, Norman Naveau, who has also resided in urban areas, acknowledged that the building of generating stations or dams takes only a limited amount of land, but expressed concern that secondary development could lead to air and water pollution problems and environmental deterioration.

He summarized his feelings when he said:

"There must be a way of solving problems without destroying the environment; there must be a solution."

The residents of Mattagami indicated they now enjoy and appreciate the advantages of electricity but are still puzzled that although their community had to be relocated in 1921 in order that a dam for hydro-electric power generation could be built, it was only five years ago that electricity was installed in their community.

ATTAWAPISKAT



The meeting in Attawapiskat with Chief Emile Nakogee, his Councillors and several Elders lasted six hours and was formally conducted in Cree. The late Xavier Sutherland acted as translator.

Chief Nakogee remarked that this was the first time his Band had been consulted about future development in Northern Ontario and that they wished to be involved in any power planning that might take place. Louis Sutherland, a Councillor, echoed this wish to participate:

"Energy source alternatives must be looked into. We must talk together to look into these alternatives other than damming rivers. We must consider effects to the Ontario people. We must sit together, work together . . . I would like to see power development in other areas and we would like to live together like in the past and not hurt each other."

Chief Nakogee noted the James Bay project in Quebec. He stated that the native people were not involved in the planning from the outset of the project and so they did not understand why they were relocated and financially compensated. "At James Bay there was a (financial) settlement; after the money is gone there is suffering for the future generations. Money is only money; here today, gone tomorrow. The environmental effects are something else — we must think about the future."

Chief Nakogee told the Commission party that, in future, in order to participate meaningfully, the Indian people must have information available to them in their own languages. At that time the Executive Director of the Commission agreed to supply both Cree and Ojibway translations of a summary of the Commission's First Report and the proceedings of the Northern visit.

The residents of Attawapiskat were concerned about the possible negative effects on the environment and their life-style which could result from damming the rivers in order to generate hydro-electric power. They told the party that not only would fishing be affected, but also the traditional hunting and trapping grounds could be destroyed. Thus, the Indian way of life would be lost not only for the present, but also for future generations. Chief Nakogee summed up this concern of his people by saying:

"The important issue we are concerned with is electric power, creating, generating power, whichever means will be the best. Let us not consider damming the rivers in a hurry. You will see the damage already done; you will hear the people in various parts of Ontario tell what has been created but let's try and find alternatives — other possibilities where we can create energy. Let us not dam the rivers damaging the environment — the people's way of life."

Associated with the native people's concern for hydro-electric development was their concern for potential related resources development and, in particular, developments in the forest industry. Louis Sutherland, a Councillor, summed up their concern as follows:

"Long ago the management of forests and animals was done by our forefathers, before government. When we hunted in one area we didn't take everything, we always left something before going to another area. Where our camps were we cleared only enough land for the camps, we didn't clear the whole area. In other words, we only took just what we needed. This is what our grandfathers knew — how to manage the environment . . . We know how we used to live and we want to continue living like this. We want to keep what we have, like a garden, so we have something in the future."





## FORT HOPE

Population:	589
Industry:	sawmill strictly for community needs
Commerce:	*Band general store, The Hudson's Bay Company store
Transportation	3500' air strip community not accessible by road
Communications:	microwave dish — excellent long distance telephone communications; radio-telephone at the Hudson's Bay Company store
Electric Power:	diesel generator — Band-owned; majority of homes, school, community hall and Band office have electricity
Medical Facilities:	Federal government nursing station
School:	primary school — kindergarten through grade 8
Proximity to Major Centre:	225 air miles north of Thunder Bay
Main Source of Livelihood:	government projects; hunting and fishing are only supplementary
	*There is now a Fort Hope Development Corporation operating several hunting/fishing tourist camps and a motel.
Chief:	Charlie O'Keese
Councillors:	Ida Bayce                    Patrick Moonias Clara Papa                    Victoria Atlookan Alan Slipperjack
Band Administrator:	Andy Yesno
Participants at Meeting:	Charlie O'Keese                    Noah Atlookan Bob Baxter                            Charleston Slipperjack Andrew Metat                        Claire Metat John Cochese

In Fort Hope, there was a two and one-half hour meeting in the large community hall with over 100 residents in attendance. This was a formal meeting conducted in Ojibway with the late Harry Achneepineskum acting as translator. The Hudson's Bay Company and the Band-operated stores as well as the sawmill and the airport construction were closed for the duration of the meeting.

As with the other communities visited, the residents of Fort Hope were concerned about changes in their life-style that could result from flooding and diversion of the rivers. Many, in fact, openly expressed their reluctance to have their life-style altered. Noah Atlookan, a trapper, clearly expressed his personal feelings when he said:

“I have no use for electricity; if I want to see where I am going in the dark, I shall put fish oil in a saucer and put a twig in there, light it and see where I am going.”

The residents of this community talked at length about their forefathers and the relationship those who had gone before them had with the natural environment. They expressed a common fear that flooding would lead to the destruction of their ancestors' burial grounds.

Chief Charlie O'Keese summarized the feelings of his people when he said:

“We are concerned with the preservation of our land in Northern Ontario; the life, people, animals, birds, fish — our way of life. We want to give our children a chance. We want to give them the land in the same condition as our forefathers gave it to us. Where else can you go to find water as fresh and clean as hundreds of years ago? That is one of the reasons why our land is so dear to us.”



## WEBEQUIE

Population:	378
Industry:	sawmill, for community use only
Commerce:	As Webequie is a satellite of Fort Hope, it is part of the Fort Hope Development Corporation which operates hunting and fishing camps
Transportation:	community is only accessible by seaplane
Communications:	the only radio-telephone is operated by the Hudson's Bay Company
Electric Power:	Department of Indian Affairs diesel generator for school and Band office only; the Hudson's Bay Company store has its own generator
Medical Facilities:	closest medical centre is Lansdowne House, 50 air miles distant
School:	primary school – kindergarten through grade 8
Proximity to Major Centre:	325 miles north of Thunder Bay
Community Leader:	Solomin Suganqueb
Councillors:	Josiah Jacob Edward Spence Stephen Shewaybick

Enroute to Winisk, the Commission party stopped at Webequie, a satellite community of Fort Hope. Ron Smith, the Commission Executive Director, had an informal meeting with the community leader, Solomin Suganqueb who led him on a tour of the complete community. During this walk through the settlement Solomin pointed out that the Webequie residents are very dependent on diesel fuel for their energy needs. One small generator supplies electric power to the community school and a few other buildings. A diesel motor drives a sawmill which has cut all of the lumber used to construct eight new homes this past year.

Basically, the community operates without electric power. The lack of this energy form was not discouraging to the people. Rather they displayed optimism and were looking forward to future economic development through the active development of their hunting and fishing camps and their craft industry.

WINISK



The formal meeting with 45 residents of Winisk was held in the community hall and conducted in Cree.

The Commission party had decided to travel to this Northern community on the shores of Hudson Bay to observe an environment that had been suggested as a suitable location for a pilot wind generation project. Grand Council Treaty No. 9, in making its presentation to the Commission in Orangeville in July, 1976, had recommended the use of Northern communities for prototype wind generation experiments and a study, recently released by the Ministry of Energy, indicated that there was potential for wind power generation along the shores of both Hudson Bay and James Bay.

This study, entitled "Wind Power Report" is a report prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Energy and Ontario Hydro by the Ontario Research Foundation and the Electrical Research Association of the United Kingdom. It indicated that:

"For the foreseeable future the high cost of wind generated electricity will prevent it from competing with energy from the grid system. It must be considered as suited to supplying energy at remote locations where the competition is with energy from diesel powered generators . . . To be remote from the grid system may imply relatively small distances. At a cost of \$25,000 per mile for transmission lines, distances beyond even ten miles can be sufficient to justify an alternative method of supplying energy."

Although this study indicated that the Winisk area was suitable for such a project, the residents themselves appeared to have received little information on the application of such an alternative technology. When asked about future generation alternatives, the members of the community responded enthusiastically by talking about a grant they had received to salvage, move and install in the community a diesel generator which had to be abandoned at a radar base a number of miles away. The community is looking forward to electric power supplied by diesel generation which they will install themselves.

As with other communities, the residents of Winisk were concerned with changes in the environment, life-style and livelihood that could result by the damming of rivers. Louis Bird, the translator for this meeting, summed up these concerns when he said:

"If development starts it will destroy the grass, by bringing in the machinery, as well as changing the river. The whole environment would change. It would cover a large area. Grass would be destroyed — the fish would die. Also the animals would move away from the area. Our livelihood would be destroyed."

The residents however recognized that development may take place in Northern Ontario in the future and indicated that if such developments occurred, they would want to participate in the planning from the early stages. They felt that for people in such remote communities as Winisk, money was not a compensation for the losses they would incur. Michael Hunter, an Elder in the community, stated:

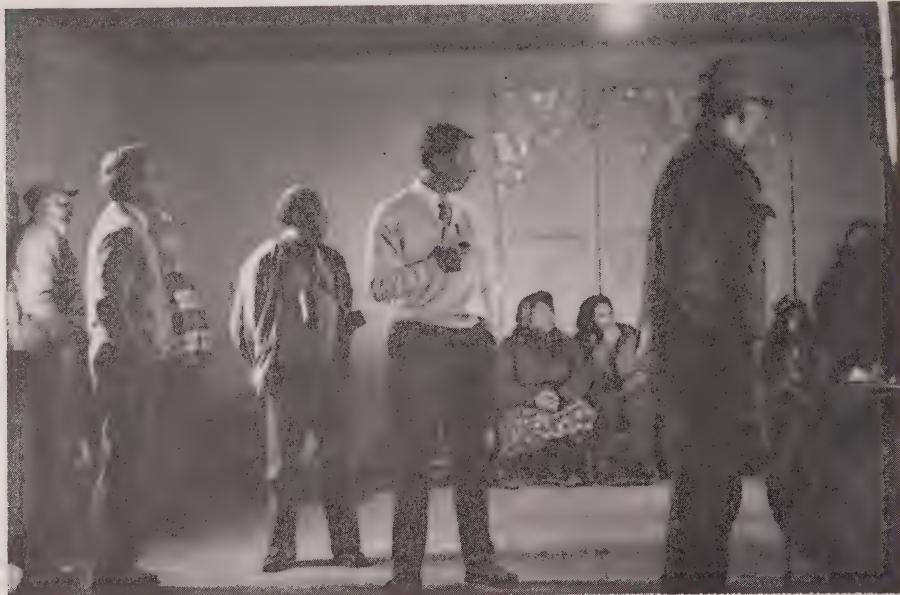
"No amount of money would be enough. In my opinion this country around me, the nature and trees, to me it is much more than money."

He went on to say:

"We don't want to copy your style of life. We wish to maintain our own."

Just to give you one small example of the way we enjoy what the Creator has given to us. You see our small wood stove — we still enjoy the crackling of the fire — it is our style of living.”

At the conclusion of the meeting all the community residents in attendance voted unanimously to support the statements made by the various speakers.



## EPILOGUE

When inviting the Commission to travel north, Grand Council Treaty No. 9 not only requested that we listen to the native people but also that we observe their environment and their way of life. Throughout the trip the late Harry Achneepineskum and the late Xavier Sutherland spent considerable time with members of the party pointing out environmental circumstances they considered significant. In particular, they emphasized:

- i) the uncertainty of the water conditions,
- ii) the sensitivity of the flora and fauna in the Hudson Bay lowlands,
- iii) the vast distances between settlements,
- iv) the changing weather conditions,
- v) the high winds in the coastal area.

It was clearly evident that this year the water level of the rivers draining into James Bay and Hudson Bay was down considerably. Sandbars and dried out areas were evident where in previous years water had flowed abundantly. At one location the party was told that the river water level was down thirty inches from the average water level, and when observed from the air, the river bottoms near the coast were quite visible.

Drainage in the flat land of the Hudson Bay lowlands appears to be very poor. The thicker vegetation grows only in thin ribbons along the river's edge and behind this can be seen low scrub and numerous pockets of undrained water. The land is only a very few feet above the rivers and because of the flatness, flooding rivers would spread water for miles over the lowlands. On the land amongst the scrub and between the bogs, lichen spreads like a fine green blanket. Trails which were said to have been cut many years previous were still very visible through the sparse ground cover.

Travel and communications through the vast area of land whose rivers drain into Hudson Bay and James Bay have evidently been poor in the past but it was evident that major projects are underway to change this situation. Since there are no permanent roads between communities (short roads and vehicles were evident in communities) allowing year round ground travel, air travel using the rivers as landing strips has been the main means to move people and goods. Distances are long and travel on float planes is slow. For the party to fly from Attawapiskat to Fort Hope took approximately four hours (about the same distance as Toronto to Montreal). However, in the communities visited, land base air strips are being constructed with electronic beacons that will require electrical power from the diesel generators. These strips will allow for faster travel using larger twin engined wheeled aircraft.

In all of the communities visited, with the exception of Winisk, the radio telephone has been the main means of voice contact with other communities and with the south. In Winisk, a large microwave dish has been installed establishing reliable communications via satellite among the northern communities as well as with the rest of the world. A similar installation was taking place when we were in Fort Hope, and we learned that these installations were planned for several other communities in the Treaty No. 9 area. In fact they have now been completed in Attawapiskat and Fort Hope. Electric power for these installations will be necessary and will usually be supplied by community diesel generation.

Where electric power is installed we noted that its use is usually limited to

lighting and refrigeration. Electric power is not supplied in sufficient quantities for cooking, water heating and space heating, but rather fuel oil and wood are used in these applications where high quality energy is not necessary.

Alternate generation forms, particularly wind, for use in northern communities was something that Treaty No. 9 had stressed in their brief. For this reason, the party took particular note of the wind conditions along the coastal areas. In Attawapiskat we did not observe high wind conditions but this was the converse of the situation in Winisk where we felt the force of the air blowing in off Hudson Bay. While not excessively high when we arrived on Thursday, September 2, it had blown up to 35 mph winds by the next morning when the party travelled from the air base on the east side of the Winisk River to the community on the west side. We learned from the people of the area that winds of this level were not uncommon. Wind energy for these areas may in fact provide a supplement to the fuel requirements of diesel generation.

Distances, weather and technological changes, while creating uncertainties for the people we met, were not viewed with fear but rather with caution. By living with their environment the people have adapted to more modern means of travel, (i.e. outboard motor-powered canoes), live for extended periods on traplines considerable distances from their communities, and appear very happy with the life-style they have in these remote communities. They have accepted progress and are looking forward to the improved travel and communications in their regions. They do not reject nor are they against change but rather they want to participate in the planning processes for these changes which could affect their communities, their life-styles and the environment in which they live.



